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Basic Meditation Techniques

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The course is divided into three sections. Section one deals with what meditation is and how it plays a part in the lives of those who use it. Section two will go into the techniques and tools of meditation. Section three gives suggestions on how to use what you've learned, in everyday life. A list of books for further reading on the subject, will be given at the end of section three.

Webster defines meditation as "The act of meditating; close or continued thought; the revolving of a subject in the mind."

To meditate is to focus mentally on one thought, idea, or concept. It may also mean, to revolve an idea in your mind so as to change the way in which you think of that idea. Meditation is therefore, a tool with which you may manipulate thought in an organized manner.

Many people view meditation as a very difficult thing to learn. In reality though, we do it often without even knowing it. When you daydream or find your mind fixed on one thought, that is a form of meditation. Have you ever watched a bird in flight, or stared up at the clouds in the sky, or maybe even found yourself watching a stream of water flow by? If you have and at that moment the rest of the world around you has seemed removed, then you were in a state of meditation. The real key to this practice, is to be able to exercise control over your thoughts and awareness of the world around you.

There are many groups of people for whom meditation is an everyday ritual. Others use it at special times as a means of relaxation and "mental house cleaning." It allows the individual a freedom unlike no other freedom. The freedom to look inside oneself and learn just who you are. Some use it as a way of being closer to nature or God. No matter how you wish to use it, you will find it a healthy and very rewarding experience.

Most all religions practice meditation in one way or another. Eastern philosophies such as Yoga, and Buddism are not the only ones to view meditation as a way of looking for the Truth found in one's own consciousness. Even in Christianity meditation finds a place of value. The Bible itself mentions the value of meditation. In writing to the Phillippians, the Apostle Paul tells them this. "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." (Phil. 4.8)

So you ask, what can it do for me. Well, beyond just being a good way to really relax, which we can all use in this hectic world, it can be a doorway to the Truth inside yourself. It is a way of gaining wisdom. Knowledge has always been fairly easy to come by. Wisdom on the other hand, is a bit harder to grasp onto.

In "The Task" by William Cowper, the following line is found. "Knowledge dwells in heads replete with thoughts of other men: Wisdom, in minds attentive to their own."

For me, mediation becomes a way of "grounding" myself, of reaching a place of peace and stability, where I can find how I fit into the universe.

In many philosophies, mediation is viewed as a necessary skill. All those who are students of these philosophies must learn the ways of mediation early in their training. Although the techniques may vary from one group to another, the most basic concepts remain the same. The ability to be able to focus on one thought and selectively block out all others is the foundation upon which many more advanced skills will be built. These skills may range from telepathy to the ability to move objects with only the mind.

It is well known that Yogi adepts can lower their breathing and heart rates to near death levels. This is something you should not try as it takes years of practice to learn and can be quite dangerous. Still, these yogis are proof of the type of power the mind can exercise over the body through meditation.

In some cultures, the use of drugs to achieve a meditative state is encouraged. The American Indians for example, used drugs derived from various plants to put themselves into an altered state of consciousness. This was usually done as a religious practice and as an event marking the change from one state of life to another. A good example would be the ceremony marking the coming into manhood of a young boy. Today there are still many, who advocate the use of drugs to achieve these altered states. It is my opinion that such measures are neither necessary nor good. You can reach an altered state of consciousness without the use of drug induced "highs". It takes practice, but it can be done.

In New Age philosophy, the art of mediation is highly valued. We also find another well developed skill which is called "creative visualization". This is the idea of visualizing what you want to the point of it becoming reality. A good example would be a salesman visualizing himself as successful and prosperous. The concept is simple, if you can visualize a personal reality, you can change or bring that reality into being. "Positive Thinking" is a very similar idea. The technique of creative visualization goes beyond positive thinking however. It deals with the premise that we all create our own reality and therefore have the power to change many aspects of that reality. The idea of "personal reality" is a lengthy one and we do not have enough room to cover it in this course.

So far we have looked briefly at what meditation is and how it is used. By no means have we touched on all the aspects of this practice. There are many books on the subject which cover it in much more detail. My purpose is to give you an overview of the many facets of meditation in the hope that you will wish to learn more.

Basic Meditation Techniques

This is the second part of a three part online course in Basic Meditation Techniques

The course is divided into three sections. Section one deals with what meditation is and how it plays a part in the lives of those who use it. Section two will go into the techniques and tools of meditation. Section three gives suggestions on how to use what you've learned, in everyday life. A list of books for further reading on the subject, will be given at the end of section three.

In this second section of the "Basic Meditation Techniques" course, we will discuss various relaxation procedures and how they will aid you in entering a trance or meditative state. You will also be given some ideas about types of music and other "tools" which can help you achieve these relaxed states of mind. Let's begin.

First, let's set the stage for our meditation practice. You should pick a place which is as private and safe as possible. An altered state of mind, as in meditation, lessens your awareness of the outside world. For this reason, it is not advisable to practice these techniques in a public place where there is a chance of being mugged, robbed, or molested. If you are at home, with other family members or friends present, ask that you not be disturbed and that all other noise in the house be kept to a minimum. When you have found a place suitable for meditation, you may begin.

"The seekers of new mind states-the mind control devotees, the encounter group enthusiasts, the drug takers, the psychics, the meditators - all are on a journey into the interior universe trying to burst the limits of the socially conditioned mind. Weither acceptable or unacceptable, moral or immoral, wise or foolish, the mind of man is stirring toward a new evolution." Dr. Barbara Brown (1)

As I said in section one, trance or meditative states, alter the way your mind deals with the realities it accepts as normal. Things which are experienced in a trance state are often not easily expressed in everyday language. You will at some level, experience a heightened state of awareness. Colors, smells, and sounds may seem amplified from what they normally are.

People who can achieve very deep states of trance often leave their bodies in astral projection, or have psychic experiences.

I highly recommend, that if you wish to enter deep states of meditation, you do so under the guidance and teaching of someone who is well trained in the practice of such techniques. The key thing to remember is that it's not what level your working on as much as what you are learning. There is a lot to be gained in wisdom and knowledge at all levels of trance.

Now let's learn some simple and useful relaxation exercises.

You want to be sure that the time you pick to practice your meditation is a time when you are least likely to be disturbed. You should not be overly tired or have just finished eating as both of those conditions may cause you to fall asleep. Even though you wish to achieve an altered state of consciousness, you do want to remain conscious to some degree. If you fall asleep when you are meditating, no harm is done and you will awaken quite refreshed and rested. Unfortunately though, you may not be able to recall all the things you experienced while in trance.

If you are lying down, be sure your back and neck are properly supported so as not to fatigue the body. If you are sitting, be sure that both feet are flat on the floor and that you are sitting as erect as possible without being too stiff or strained. You should have your arms resting comfortably in your lap with palms up.

In either case, it is important that your body not become strained or fatigued for at least thirty minutes. This is a good length of time to begin with as it should put neither a physical or mental strain on your being.

Next, visualize a yourself in a cocoon of white light. You should surround yourself completely. See the light as bright and warm. You may play with this sphere of light making it bigger or smaller until it "feels" right for you. Say to yourself, "I am protected by the pure white light of all that is good and truthful. I am surrounded by the pure light which keeps out all unwanted and evil influences."

This is a good idea to do for several reasons. There are those, and I am one of them, who believe that each of generates an aura which protects us from outside influences when we are in trance. This aura may be strengthened by visualizing the light as growing brighter at our command. Even if you do not accept this idea, the practice lends a feeling of safety and security to you. Nothing which is outside of you may enter or touch you without your permission.

Learning to control and pay attention to your breathing is the next step. You should start by taking a deep breath in through your nose, hold it for the mental count of 4 and then let it all out slowly through your mouth. Repeat this until you begin to feel at rest and relaxed. Allow your breathing to settle into a steady, rhythmic rate. Just this simple

technique can relax and refresh you at any time. When you are only doing the breathing exercise, it is not necessary to go through the white light sphere visualization. Some people use a muffled metronome or recording of some other rhythmic sound, such as ocean waves, to aid them in setting the pace of their breathing. A good source of recorded sounds which can help you in meditation is a series of records and tapes which have been produced under the title "ENVIRONMENTS".

Now, as you are breathing, see yourself lying in the warm light of the sun. The light is warm and pleasant to be in. Starting with the tips of your toes, feel the light warming all of your body, slowly moving up into your legs, your trunk, and then into your arms and fingers. As you feel this warming become more and more relaxed, going deeper and deeper into a calm and quiet place.

When you fell totally relaxed and at peace, bring a single thought into your mind. It should be of a pleasant experience or of an idea such as love, joy, peace, or compassion. Focus on this one thought and if some other thought should try to intrude, picture it as being written on a clear board between you and your focal thought. Then picture it being erased from that board as it might be from a piece of paper. Deal with any thought, other than your focal thought, quickly. Try to maintain concentration on your focal thought for at least five minutes. Picture it as being real and experience it as if it were. When you are able to do this and can exclude all other thoughts as they attempt to enter your mind, you will have learned the single most important technique of meditation.

It is now time to begin coming back to normal consciousness. slowly let the thought fade from your mind and again become aware of the warm light of the sun. As you fell the light bathing you in its' warmth, start to reconnect your mind with the physical sensations of your body. Become aware of your breathing and the room around you. Do this slowly and calmly. When you are fully aware of your surroundings, open your eyes slowly. Enjoy the sense of calm and peace.

If you succeeded in doing this exercise, you should feel more relaxed and calm than normal. It is important to remember that you are comparing it to normal for you, not to what you think others would or should feel.

If you do not feel you succeeded try again in a day or two. Between mediation sessions, practice your deep breathing exercises. If you keep trying, you will soon reach a calm and meditative state. Do not attempt to meditate when you are ill, tired, or hungry. Those feelings only serve to make your efforts more difficult. A very important part to remember is that you can not force yourself into a meditative state. You must flow into it and surrender to it calmly.

Some things which are found to be helpful in meditation follow.

Try concentrating on the flame of a candle when focusing. You could also use a crystal ball. The later is rather expensive but small crystal window ornaments or pyramids also work well and cost much less.

Music is also an aid to some. The music should be quiet and rhythmic. It should bring on feelings of peace and comfort. Such music may range from New Age recordings to classical.

Another useful device is to focus on a symbol which holds special meaning for you. It may be an well known symbol or one you design yourself. As long as it holds a special meaning or expresses a special concept, it is a useful focusing tool.

This brings section two of this course to a close. In the next part I will give you some practical ways in which to use what you have learned.

The most obvious use of the techniques you have learned, is relaxation. During the course of the day, many of us have moments when the pressure becomes almost to much. When this happens, we often can't deal with other people or projects the way we should. The breathing exercises you learned in section two can help at these times.

It doesn't require a lot of time or absolute quiet as does your meditation practice. All that is required is about five minutes and relative privacy. At these times, begin doing your rhythmic breathing and visualize a place which is calm and refreshing. This simple and quick exercise, can work wonders to help you regain control in a hectic situation.

Another way in which meditation is used is in the development of psychic powers. There are several books on the subject, listed at the end of this section. Most of those who teach about the use and development of these abilities, agree that meditation is necessary to any such study. Again the reason for this is that meditation allows you to reach an altered state of consciousness. In this altered state your mind is more open to such phenomenon as telepathy. If you should decide to pursue studies in this direction, please seek the help of someone trained in these areas.

One final use I will suggest is visualization. Meditation can be used as a tool for problem solving. While in a meditative state of mind, you have the ability to take any situation and manipulate it. By that I mean you can mentally play the out the situation using several different solutions. Then, you can pick the one which seems to best solve the problem. While the use of meditation can help you deal with problem solving more effectively, it is not infallible. All it can do is allow you to think more clearly and concisely about the problem at hand.

Well that concludes this study on meditation. I hope you have gained something useful from this course. It has been by no means, a full explanation of the subject. There is much more to learn than could be covered in this short series and It is my hope that you will want to continue your studies into this fascinating and useful skill.

More studies of this type will be developed in the near future. The New Atlantis BBS will continue to post these studies as an ongoing service to it's users. Please feel free to leave suggestions on the BBS about subjects you would like to see covered.

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